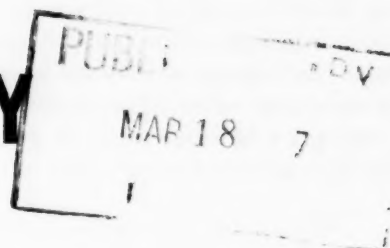


PHILOSOPHY,
RELIGION AND
EDUCATION

CHRISTIANITY and CRISIS

A Christian Journal of Opinion



The "Right to Work" Laws

Debate breaks out periodically about the "right to work" laws because propaganda is carried out almost constantly before some state legislature about these laws. They have been adopted in seventeen states and are pending in several others. Briefly, the "right to work" laws are designed to outlaw the union shop. Federal legislation has already outlawed the closed shop, which makes it impossible to be employed in an organized industry without first joining the union.

The union shop permits the employer to hire anyone, but in three months the new employee is required to join the union which has a contract in the industry. The unions regard this as the only way of gaining union security and preventing men from profiting from the higher living standards without paying for them. In extreme instances, employers who try to break the union recruit non-union men until they have a majority and then hold an election and outlaw the union. This usually is not effective for very long because the men learn in time that labor standards depend upon the power of organized labor and its right to bargain collectively. Most employers recognize the value of union security in stable labor relations and therefore do not challenge the union shop.

Significantly, the issue is never raised in Washington, since the nation, as such, has accepted the principle of collective bargaining as almost as necessary a prerequisite of justice in a technical society as universal suffrage is a prerequisite of political justice. The issue is raised only in states where the opponents of collective bargaining can count on the traditional individualism of the farmers to support the traditional individualism of a pre-industrial era. This individualism is

frequently given a pious connotation by the contention that the effort to outlaw the union shop is nothing but an effort to restore the "God-given right of a man to work."

We must admit that big unions present their own problems of justice, for they are defective in democratic control. A Senate committee under Senator McClellan is presently investigating the Teamsters and other unions because there is evidence that they are involved in racketeering. Even the very honest and progressive unions leave something to be desired in their internal democratic procedures. They do not separate the legislative from the executive functions rigorously enough, with the result that the president usually has too much power and his executive board becomes a rubber stamp.

Since both labor and management have become partners in government, in the sense that their organizations contribute something to the structures and procedures of a just society, it would be well to have an eye on all these procedures. Dave Beck, the potent and ambitious head of the Teamsters, has certainly disabused anyone who thought that unions were dedicated angels of justice. But we do not cure the problems of a technical society by eliminating the power of one of the partners of labor and management, who jointly contribute to the balance of power through which justice is achieved. Nor do we contribute anything by assuring some lonely workman of the right to find employment alone without the "federal" of unionism.

If we were really mature in our survey of the problems of an industrial age we would worry not so much about restoring an outmoded individualism as in guarding against the inflationary

dangers inherent in the connivance of big business and big labor in raising prices and wages. Perhaps we are facing a new peril to the consumer because the two giants of industry have discovered that, if they stop wrestling with each other, they can always get what they want by passing on the costs to the fateful victim, "the ultimate consumer."

R.N.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

AS WE go to press it seems likely that there will be a compromise resulting in the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Egyptian territory and some protection of Israel against Egyptian attacks. It is extremely fortunate that this result is being reached without the application of sanctions to Israel. Israel is technically in the wrong. Also there is a dynamism in Israel which the attack on Egypt illustrates and which the Arab nations naturally regard as a threat to their security. Yet, if sanctions had been applied, there would have been a very deep moral split in the free world, not least in our own country. The contrast in the treatment of Israel and of Russia would have made the application of sanctions in this case an occasion for cynicism and not a vindication of the effectiveness of the U.N.

Our policy makers had another problem for which they have not received enough sympathy from the press and from American public opinion. They seek to keep Russia from extending its power in the Middle East. This is important for the future of Israel as it is for the future of Europe and of the Arab peoples themselves. Yet, if we had been put in the position of backing Israel when she was technically in the wrong and when she can reasonably be regarded as a threat to her neighbors, we would have greatly increased the vulnerability of the Middle East to Russian influence. Russia cannot be held back except with the cooperation of several Arab countries and all Arab countries would have been tempted to seek Russian support against Israel and the West, if we had backed Israel under these conditions. It is easy to make moralistic speeches on both sides of this question but a policy that has a chance of being effective in safeguarding the freedom of that area cannot be based upon moral slogans.

A letter by Professor Platig in a recent issue of this journal expresses impatience with the idea that our action in the Middle East against com-

munist must be based upon the invitation of the Arab nations. He says: "If we have vital interests to defend in the Middle East against Soviet encroachment then we better not decline to defend them for lack of an invitation to do so." The difficulty with that argument is that it is doubtful if it would be possible to defend them without such an invitation. Instead we would stir up a hornet's nest in that region of which the Russians would be very well able to take advantage. This is all the more true since subversion rather than direct Communist aggression is the danger. If we were to occupy the Middle East and make it our sphere of influence and if we were willing to use force to control the governments and people of the area, we might get away with it for a period. But such a policy is for us psychologically, politically and morally impossible. It would involve us in a type of colonialism which would arouse bitter resistance and we would not be ruthless enough to hold on. Communism would gain incalculable propaganda advantages among all of the Bandung nations.

This kind of proposal shows the danger of thinking of the Arabs as though they were like the American Indians and could be managed or pushed around by us. The Administration deserves great credit for its realism at this point. We are often told about the objectionable features of the cultural and political life of the Arab nations as compared with Israel's internal life. These objectionable features do not make those nations any easier to control or to bypass when an outside power operates in their territory against their will.

J.C.B.

TRAITORS TO WHOM?

SOUTH AFRICA is passing into a new phase of testing the ability of men to live with their brethren. Americans are in no position to play the proverbial Pharisee, but may see in the tragic errors of another land the lengthened faults of their own. Understanding of the peculiar history and problems of South Africa is due from outsiders. Still, there is the harsh mien of the "God-denying" look, described from eloquent conviction in the Methodist statement printed in these columns six weeks ago. By official definition, that statement appears to be treasonable. Three-fourths of the people are denied opportunity, hope, a voice in their collective destiny. Even within the master fourth, who enjoy the divine right of

white skins, there must be no practical challenge to the policies of rigorous subordination.

Preparatory examination of the 156 persons arrested on allegations of treason or of offences under the Suppression of Communism Act goes forward tediously and with great cost to all concerned. The wide-flung net catches at the same time those who are soundly known as moderate liberals and those who are connected with statements of Communist hue. Perhaps the result, if not the intent, will be to intimidate liberals by subjecting them to the same treatment as ostensible radicals. Also, perhaps the younger and bolder Africans will conclude that since moderate liberalism is forbidden, violent revolution is enjoined upon all who require change. Extreme acts of the Government may prove the best recruiting agents for communism.

The legal situation and the political climate are formidable. South African authorities quoted by the State Information Office, Pretoria, say that among other actions previously adjudged by the courts to constitute high treason are "holding meetings or inciting people, even by way of prayer, to join or continue hostilities against the State." The Suppression of Communism Act defines a Communist as one who "aims at the encouragement of hostility between the European and the non-European races," or who promotes or threatens disturbance or disorder with the purpose of "bringing about any political, industrial, social, or economic change."

Since inequality is enshrined in the Constitution and *apartheid* is the essence of the present State, organization or education on behalf of democracy or equality becomes an act hostile to the State, indeed, "communism." Recently the Minister of Justice publicly claimed that active communism had been entirely expunged from South Africa, but the doctrine was covertly returning "in a new cloak—that all people in the country were equal." This is no sudden madness, nor the consequence of any fresh plot of novel importance. For Premier Strijdom is quoted as saying in 1948, as a member of the Cabinet: "Anybody who purposely tried to upset the Government's plan to put into operation its *apartheid* policy or who failed to do their duty towards the realization of that aim, would be guilty of treason."

Such men as Alan Paton, the Archbishop of the Cape Province and the Bishop of Johannesburg have enough trust in the courts and in the public of South Africa to raise a fund for defense of those now examined for treason or for "statutory communism." Dean James Pike is chairman, Drs. Van

Dusen, Niebuhr, Mackay and Fosdick, Eleanor Roosevelt and Norman Cousins are among the members, of a committee in this country which is sponsoring contributions to the South African Defense Fund, 4 West Fortieth St., New York 18, N. Y. M.S.B.

PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC RELATIONS

THE JESUIT weekly, *America* (March 2nd), carries a remarkable article by an Austrian layman who is well-known in this country, Dr. von Kuehneldt-Leddhin. He describes some of the differences between Catholic-Protestant relations on the continent and in this country. In general there is much better cooperation, much more discussion on the theological level than here. He tells of a book, published in Holland, written by Calvinist and Catholic theologians, of annual conferences in Germany of Lutheran and Catholic theologians on the highest level. At a recent Catholic Congress in Berlin, the Catholic chairman, a south German bishop, stayed in the home of Bishop Dibelius during the whole week. Catholic periodicals have Protestant advisors on their editorial boards and recently the Lutheran weekly *Christ und Welt* carried, in a special edition, six articles written by Catholics.

Perhaps the most surprising tendency reported is the change in the Catholic attitude toward Luther, the abandonment of the usual caricatures of Luther and a growing understanding of his religious depth.

Dr. Kuehneldt-Leddhin sees many reasons why the situation is so different in this country. The Catholic inferiority complex which stems from the fact that Catholics were "until recently a socially depressed body" is a major factor. He believes that the recent division of Protestants between fundamentalists and liberals who lacked a theology which had an historical foundation made it difficult for Catholics to discuss theology with any Protestant theologians, a somewhat partisan belief.

This article does not mention it but it is interesting that two of the best books about Barth in Europe were written by Roman Catholics. Perhaps there is a suggestion of what may come in the future in the fact that one of the best articles about Tillich's thought in this country is by Father Weigel, a Jesuit scholar. The most authoritative book about ecumenical thinking is by Father Edward Duff, his *Social Thought of the World Council of Churches*. But we are just at the beginning of such a conversation between Protestants and Catholics on the level of theology.

J.C.B.

How We Can Help the U.N. Survive

ERNEST A. GROSS

THE UNITED NATIONS is a different organization from that which was forged ten years ago on the anvil of the wartime coalition. There was never any doubt that the veto could, if abused, gravely limit the effectiveness of the United Nations. Nevertheless, the abuse of the veto is not a disease of the Charter. It is a symptom of the disease of nations, in particular of one nation which has from the beginning failed to comply with the precepts of world order.

Another casualty of the Soviet revolt against the Charter is the failure to set up U.N. military forces under Article 43. This has destroyed the original grand design: to vest in the world organization actual preponderance of military power for peace. Other potential assets of international order have likewise been frozen by the "cold war." The United Nations was to have been "a center for harmonizing the action of nations." It has become a forum for discord, no less valuable because it accurately reflects the sorry state of a divided world.

A Sense of Common Interest

In the light of these developments, what is meant by calls for "strengthening the United Nations"? For some, the question evokes thoughts of new forms of organization: world legislatures, international armies, structures of world federalism, and the like. One must respect the motives behind such proposals. Yet, it may be said that it is not their absence which does evil, but the evil which accounts for their absence. The question is not *whether* we should have international order, but *how* we can obtain it within all areas of practicable action.

It is possible to misread the lessons to be learned in this respect from the history both of the League and of the United Nations. The world of 1918, like the world of 1945, rejected the structure and concept of the superstate. Nations were, and still are, unprepared to delegate to a world organization unrestricted supra-national attributes. Just as the veto was built into the Charter, so each member of the League of Nations was free to decide whether the Covenant had been violated in a particular case. If it decided in the affirmative, it was nevertheless under no legal

duty to aid the victim of aggression. The series of irretrievable losses—Manchuria, Ethiopia, Spain, China, Soviet Union and Nazi Germany—threw the League into bankruptcy and the world into war.

Nevertheless, the fault is not to be found in mechanical or juridical weaknesses of the Covenant. When the hour came for the dissolution of the League, the French leader Paul-Boncour voiced a general sentiment: "It was not the League that failed . . . It was the nations which neglected it. It was the Governments which abandoned it."

In other words, the League did not collapse merely because it lacked legal power to make binding decisions. It died from the disregard by member states of their duty *to carry out their own recommendations*. It is, of course, a moral duty to which I refer. Yet, in a world of order, even a moral yardstick is supposed to have thirty-six inches.

The democratic peoples were more partial to peace for themselves than to justice for others. A sense of common interest was lacking—at least, it was not "common" enough. Hence the symbolic value of the League as an institution declined with each unchallenged threat to the peace and finally withered away. "It was the nations which neglected it." What they neglected, in fact, was their duty to themselves.

We shall, for a long time, confront the Communist threat. It is true that we must continually seek solutions of those problems which divide and imperil us all: uncontrolled armaments, enslaved nations or halves of nations, subversion and threats of aggression. Improvements in machinery can be devised and, as in the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution, have represented a large step forward. Nevertheless, it seems unrealistic to project schemes which envisage Soviet participation in an international parliament or police force. And, though all would agree that the world needs more "law," there is no evidence whatever that any of the Big Powers is prepared to lift the latch of the veto. For some time to come, it seems safe to say that solutions will not be found through institutional mechanisms as such.

On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly evident that *recommendations* by the world body have a potentially compulsive quality greater than foreseen at San Francisco. This is a fact decisively

Mr. Gross is former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and is Chairman of the Department of International Affairs of the National Council of Churches.

important to the future of the organization. Even though the exceptions have been serious indeed—e.g., Kashmir, Palestine and Hungary—nevertheless, all the important successes of the United Nations in the political field have been due to responses to recommendations, rather than to “binding decisions.”

It may be that peace, and the future of civilization itself, will depend upon the extent to which recommendations of the United Nations can be endowed with moral compulsion. The moral component of power is frequently ignored or minimized by the advocates of “power politics.” I believe it to be self-evident that although moral force cannot move mountains, it moves people—and people can move mountains.

In short, talk about “strengthening the United Nations” is hollow unless it squarely faces the central issue: how can the United Nations be effectively used as a means of infusing into the faltering community of the free, a sense of *common interest*?

The Budget

The first and most important policy for strengthening the United Nations would be for us to enable the United Nations to place larger resources and energies at the service of those vast populations which are determined to achieve higher standards of well-being and freedom. It is natural that high among our concerns should be the threat of Communist imperialism. But this is all the more reason to take into account problems which are at the top of the agenda of those peoples who are prime targets of Communist subversion.

I am sure that future historians will regard the budget of the United Nations as a rather pathetic document. Twelve million dollars is set aside for: all regional economic activities, administration of all economic and human rights programs, narcotic drugs control, world-wide statistical work, and administration of the refugee program! Of this amount, the United States pays one-third, or about four million dollars. This is less than one-tenth of one per cent of our annual expenditures for foreign aid. It is, in short, a proportion so miniscule that for all practical purposes it may be said that our use of the United Nations in this area is but a gesture.

There is nothing visionary about suggestions for a substantial increase in the United Nations budget for technical assistance and programs for mutual economic aid. This contemplates such down-to-earth projects as economic surveys, agri-

culture and forestry, fisheries, reclamation, hydro-electric power, flood control, communications, transportation and public administration. Some of this work is now being done by the Specialized Agencies, but their budgets total only forty million dollars, almost half of which is for personal services.

The Common Interest of Human Rights

Furthermore, the intense preoccupation with human rights felt by hundreds of millions around the world should not seem to us a mere alien nuisance. We can seek much enlightenment on the subject of civil rights here at home. The fact that in Asia it is the majorities, rather than the minorities, who aspire to full and equal dignity should merely serve to increase our determination to find solutions both at home and abroad.

The consequences of our loss of leadership in this field in recent years are hard to appraise. Having been leaders in efforts to formulate a Covenant on Human Rights, we abruptly announced in April, 1953, our opposition to any treaties whatever on this subject. The Chairman of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights described our reversal of policy as a “bombshell”; disappointment and regret were voiced by representatives from almost every continent.

Similarly, having himself led the drive in 1948 for a Genocide Convention, the Secretary of State advised the Senate in 1953 that the Administration would not press “at the moment” for its ratification. There is no indication three years later of a change of intention, despite the fact that we



voted in the General Assembly in November, 1956, for a resolution invoking the Genocide Convention in the case of the Soviet deportations from Hungary. We have likewise announced our opposition to an anti-slavery treaty, on the ground

that it "deals with subjects generally considered to be in the area of domestic jurisdiction." In short, Senator Bricker threatens to take the fort without firing a shot.

Closely related is the issue of "colonialism." Officials have assailed Asian neutralism as "immoral." Yet a catalogue of problems or disputes vital to others about which we are wary of committing ourselves would be a long one indeed. It would include such disputes as Algeria, Cyprus and New Guinea. I have heard delegates to the U.N. attribute our "non-alignment" on these matters to the fact that they do not involve Communist pressures or the "cold war." The Bandung conferees (including Thailand, Japan and the Philippines) take a strong stand on them and often resent our "neutralism."

From all this, it seems clear that we are not following a course in the United Nations which has converged, nor is likely to converge, with the highest aspirations of the multitudes of man. American unilateral programs must continue. It is not suggested that the United Nations become the sole—or even the largest—channel for economic and technical aid. At the present time it is neglected and forlorn. One can travel across Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and up the Pacific, and find virtually no popular awareness that the United Nations is concerned in any way with economic programs. Yet we expect these same people to respond to calls of that organization in circumstances of political crises of vast moment to ourselves. A sense of common interest cannot be built upon slogans and postures. It must grow like a tree, with roots and branches.

U.N.—Instrument for Diplomacy

I turn now to a quite different aspect of improved use of the United Nations machinery. Diplomacy is the science of navigating a set course. When the way is dark and the going gets rough, sea-room is essential to navigation. Similarly, we are finding that a prime value of the United Nations is the space it offers in which clashing and complex interests can maneuver. This is called "multilateral diplomacy," a phrase sometimes derided by the narrower exponents of power politics. To take an analogy in keeping with the primitive state of world order, the United Nations forum is somewhat like those healing springs at which warring Indian tribes used to meet and, by tacit agreement, hold their peace. As the agony of wars becomes unbearable and the wells of national diplomacy threaten to run dry, governments will

perforce rely increasingly upon the United Nations as a sort of diplomatic reservoir.

Indeed, the United Nations is potentially one of the most effective instruments of diplomacy man has ever fashioned. The opportunities it affords for timely consultation, bilaterally or in groups, are unexampled. The forum offers unique advantages for constant personal contacts among delegates versed in political and economic affairs. The open debates and public statements before the microphone account for a small proportion of the work done. Debate may serve as a means of pressure and an adjunct of diplomacy. But it is not, and never can be, a substitute for negotiation.

In order to serve its highest purposes as a means of conducting foreign policy, however, the United Nations must be employed imaginatively and in close conjunction with bilateral and regional negotiation. Above all, it should be fashioned as a tool for diplomacy rather than as a weapon for recrimination.

What does all this come to? One could sum it up in a word: leadership. Yet this word sometimes seems abstract or even vacuous. The objective is *persuasion*, which Woodrow Wilson once said, "is accomplishing by creeping into the confidence of those you would lead." Perhaps this is just another way of describing the imaginative and patient efforts necessary to forge a sense of common interest among the freedom-loving people of the world. In fact, are there any other kind of people?



In Our Next Issue

ROBERT MCAFEE BROWN writes on Catholic-Protestant understanding.

"Father Bouyer (in *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*) has helped us to see the extent to which a Roman Catholic both can and cannot grasp the spirit of Protestantism. . . . His book must be regarded as a highly significant next step in the ongoing ecumenical discussion—a discussion which will bear fruit to just the degree that his contribution is taken seriously on both sides."

CORRESPONDENCE

Foreign Policy Discussion

The following is part of a letter sent to Kenneth Thompson by Louis J. Halle, a former member of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, who wrote Civilization and Foreign Affairs and is now teaching at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.

I have the impression that the study of international relations must cope with one hazard which does not affect other fields in anything like so great a degree. This is that the impact of international relations on the generality of observers or students comes through the language of propaganda and counter-propaganda, a language totally unsuited to understanding the reality. The consequent semantic problem has to be overcome before you can begin on the problem itself.

During the war it was taken for granted that all nations belonged to one of two species, "peace-loving" or "aggressor." All the plans for the post-war world were based on this concept, which even found its way into the U.N. Charter; and since the concept had virtually nothing to do with reality the plans could not possibly bring a settlement of international affairs. Peace was to be won by having the peace-loving nations disarm the aggressor nations, and so the German and Japanese vacuums were created on either side of the peace-loving Soviet Union. Today the concept of the two species has taken on a different terminology. All the nations are divided between "colonial" nations and "anti-colonial" nations. When you get something like the Suez crisis you don't examine the facts of the situation in order to form a judgment; you ask which side is colonial and which is anti-colonial. It appears, then, that Egypt is an anti-colonial nation while England and France are colonial nations. This, more than anything, determines the vote in the United Nations, the position of the moralists, and the bent of public opinion. And if this kind of language does not have its origin in propaganda, it is at least intimately associated with it. . . . This is not a language in which one can discuss international relations at all in the expectation of arriving at any understanding.

"We need to think things instead of words," said Justice Holmes, a piece of advice which ought to be inscribed over the portals leading into every academy.

Louis J. Halle

We regret that we have been unable to print more of the letters received on this subject due to the limitation of space. This area will be further dealt with in a future issue in which we will have articles by seasoned observers in Britain, France and Asia.

A Lay Voice from the South

TO THE EDITORS: It is with "fear and trembling" that I find myself taking issue with a statement made by Dr. Niebuhr in his recent editorial, "The Effect of the Supreme Court Decision" (Feb. 4, 1957).

Dr. Niebuhr said, "The Protestant ministers in the South are forced to be heroes, if they would be at peace with their consciences, because they are supported by the lay opinion in the churches only in cases of heroic action as in Clinton, Tennessee."

Many of us who have been working in areas of racial tension are coming to the conclusion that lay opinion in the churches is most responsive in crisis situations, but some of us are still quite hopeful that lay people can be led to see that a crisis situation exists before it erupts into violence. There seems to be little that the Protestant minister can do in the way of mobilizing his congregation until the community recognizes that its back is against the wall—but this recognition may well dawn with the first movement toward court action rather than the first mob action.

We who are churchmen seem to be ridiculously unaware of resources outside of the church upon which we can call for help. I have heard a minister admit that he refused all offers of help during a community crisis, believing that he must move very slowly and attempt to take his congregation with him. I do not question his integrity, but I do question his wisdom. If there was ever a time when the church needed to lose its reluctance to learn from and cooperate with the social scientists, the time is now. And the minister who believes he must have a majority vote of his congregation before he can make any specific witness or contribution in areas of racial tension may not have done a great deal of creative thinking as to the ways one may witness.

In my humble lay opinion, too many ministers are allowing themselves to think of their role as one of martyrdom, and this statement is especially relevant to those of us who live in the border states. Those of us who have any real insight into our sinful nature must recognize that martyrdom is sometimes the easiest way out. Many of us would choose to make a once-for-all stand (at some later date), when our alternative is the tedious, tiresome, and often seemingly futile struggle of daily encounter with evil. Many of us would rather have one glorious wrestling match with the Devil and get our heads cut open than to wrestle every day with members of our congregation and community leaders and the Lord as to what next step we can take. I would even venture to say that there are very few white ministers in the South who do not have at least one lay person in their churches who would support them in an effort which would make individual heroism unnecessary, and here it seems to me is the place each minister must begin. Individual heroism may be inevitable, but it is the last step and not the first.

I offer these comments with humility. I have known the twinges of excitement and pride which are the result of one's being harassed by early morning phone calls, and I have known the deep fatigue and near despair which tempts one to believe that dying gloriously for a cause is to be desired more than living with the daily tension, struggle and agony. I am one of those whose Devil has time and time again urged martyrdom—but I am always reminded of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's contention that martyrdom is God's precious gift and that to expect it for our lot is a reassertion of the "old man" in us.

Jean Debusk Russell
Greeneville, Tennessee

MAR 16 1957

"A Christian Journal of Opinion"

TO THE EDITORS: I am interested in, but deeply disappointed by your reasons for a change in name "On Calling Ourselves 'Christian'" (February 18). . . .

Apparently you consider yourself a publication primarily devoted to discussing the political and economic questions of the day, with a special concern for the "people who are exploited or neglected."

This is a fine liberal viewpoint, faintly perfumed with the old rose leaves of the 1930s. But it seems to me a shocking denial of your name.

Why shouldn't *Christianity and Crisis* be just what it says—a bi-weekly devoted to publicizing the situations of tension and crisis which affect the Christian world . . .

They affect art and education and psychology and theology and churchmanship. I hope that *Christianity and Crisis* will come to recognize and assume this larger, more important role.

John E. McMillin
New York, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: In your recent statement, "On Calling Ourselves 'Christian'" (Feb. 18, 1957), you write: "It is precisely as Christians that we must constantly acknowledge that our judgments are distorted by the error and one-sidedness which are the inevitable products of our sin and finitude. But it is also as Christians that we feel impelled to express those judgments . . ."

I would like to know how you know when sin and finitude distort your judgments. If you have some way of knowing this—of knowing how you deviate from Christian "purity" in your statements—why do you continue to do so? If you do not know beforehand that your expression of judgments is distorted by error, how do you know this afterwards? What criterion of hindsight do you employ that is not available to your foresight? . . .

Howard A. Wiley
Rosemont, Pa.

These two letters raise questions with which our editorial did not have space to deal adequately, and to which some response on our part should be made.

We agree with Mr. McMillin that "the real crises besetting Christianity are by no means limited to politics and economics." It is not our intention to limit our concern to those areas.

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In fact, an earlier editorial ("The Extension of the Crisis," April 16, 1956) made precisely the same point which Mr. McMillin makes, and promised that we would attempt to make our analysis of the cultural situation an increasingly broad one. We have been trying to take steps in this direction, with articles on the arts, drama, motion pictures, literature, etc. At the same time, there is still need to have a special concern for the "people who are exploited or neglected." This is not simply a return to "the old rose leaves of the 1930s," for in this day of high employment, vast personal and national wealth and general complacency, there is continuing need for Christians to point out that all is not well everywhere, that in the midst of plenty there can be the most appalling poverty, and that in the midst of economic boom there can be the seeds of economic bust.

Mr. Wiley likewise raises an important question. If we recognize the fact that we do not possess economic, political, sociological or cultural omniscience, then how can we sift the true from the false in what we say? The answer, of course, is that we can never be fully sure. We have sometimes been embarrassingly wrong. Since we have no infallible source of wisdom at our disposal, we must make our judgments in the knowledge that we will often be wrong again. But to say that for that reason we should not speak at all is just as tragic a denial of Christian responsibility before God as is the opposing sin of claiming a kind of divine sanction for all of our human observations. There is a highly "pragmatic" element in the judgments Christians make about the social scene, which can save us both from claiming too much for what we say and also from undue reticence.

THE EDITORS

CHRISTIANITY and CRISIS

A Christian Journal of Opinion

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